

How 'Qualitable' is Qualitative research in Media and Communication studies?

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Abstract

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of methodological preferences in U.S. Communication journals based on articles published in 2016. Examining a total of 160 articles from the top five journals, the study reveals a strong bias towards quantitative research, constituting 59.37% of the articles, with a particular emphasis on descriptive methods. Qualitative research accounts for 38.75% of publications, while mixed methods are notably less prevalent at 1.87%. The grounding theory method stands out as the favored qualitative approach. These findings illuminate a prevailing inclination towards quantitative research paradigms and suggest that articles emphasizing descriptive quantitative methods have a higher likelihood of publication, underscoring the need for a more balanced representation of qualitative and quantitative approaches in communication research.

Key Words: *qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, descriptive, correlation, quasi-experiments, experiments, ethnography, narrative, phenomenological, case study, grounding theory*

INTRODUCTION

The debates surrounding research methods in communication studies and the broader field of social sciences have seemingly reached a resolution. Initially, qualitative research faced criticism, characterized by concerns about imprecise tools, biased observations, and selective data reporting (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). However, James Carey's influential article, 'Cultural Approach to Communication,' published in 1975, played a pivotal role in bolstering the credibility of qualitative research (Carey, 1975). It's worth noting that quantitative research methods have faced relatively less criticism regarding their authenticity. Carey argued that profound insights could emerge from seemingly insignificant subjects such as poems, plays, songs, rituals, and conversations (p.190).

Since Carey's groundbreaking work, a multitude of studies have emerged to defend the authenticity of qualitative research. These efforts aimed to establish qualitative research as an equal counterpart to empirical studies. A significant surge in qualitative research methods was observed in communication graduate programs, as noted in a 1998 survey by Frey, Anderson, and Friedman. Drawing from their initial findings with Botan & Kreps (1991), the authors acknowledged the shift that had taken place in communication research. Initially, communication research methods had a predominant focus on quantitative approaches (p. 247), relegating qualitative research to a relatively unexplored territory.

Carol Pardun's analysis of prominent media studies journals further confirmed the increasing prominence of qualitative articles. Pardun's findings indicated that 26% of the articles published in the *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* between 1978 and 1998 were qualitative in nature (Pardun, 2000). Additionally, Pardun observed that articles utilizing mixed methods, totaling 159 articles, were the most accepted during the journal's 20-year publication period. Subsequently, Trumbo (2004) conducted similar studies on research methods in communication studies, analyzing 2,649 articles from eight communication journals. Trumbo's findings revealed that communication research articles exhibited a rough split of 60/40 between quantitative and qualitative approaches, albeit with limited combinations of both methods. These results diverged from Pardun's conclusions regarding mixed methods. However, collectively, these studies contributed to the growing acceptance of qualitative research in the field of communication, bridging the historical divide between

qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Building upon these prior studies and other assertions, this research aims to replicate and update these findings. The uniqueness of this study lies in its ability to address a literature gap by categorizing research articles based on specific qualitative and quantitative research designs employed. While previous studies categorized articles as qualitative or quantitative, this study delves deeper to identify the specific research approaches within each category. Notably, no prior research has thoroughly examined whether qualitative articles employed ethnographic approaches, narratives, case studies, grounded theory, or phenomenology. Similarly, previous studies have not dissected quantitative articles to determine if they employed descriptive, correlational, quasi-experimental, or experimental approaches.

Therefore, this study's strength lies in identifying the specific research approaches used within qualitative and quantitative research. The objective is to ascertain which research design within each method has a higher likelihood of publication in communication journal articles. The findings indicate that quantitative research articles utilizing descriptive research designs have a greater chance of being published in communication research. In contrast, qualitative studies have exhibited a steady, albeit gradual, increase, with a preference for articles employing grounded theory approaches, while ethnographic research in communication has been less favored by scholars and journal editors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Debates surrounding Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Contentions between Qualitative versus Quantitative research methods have been longstanding within the realm of social science research, yet practical investigations in this area remain limited. Contemporary discussions on this subject seem to have reached a consensus, with many scholars recognizing that both approaches possess merits and are interdependent (Kuhn, 1957; Snyder, 2005; Maxwell, 2015; Some, Gondwe, & Rowe, 2019). Nevertheless, radical scholars such as Fred Kerlinger and D.T. Campbell persist in asserting the superiority of either qualitative or quantitative methods. Kerlinger, as highlighted in Miles and Huberman's book "Qualitative Data Analysis" (1994), firmly contends that qualitative data is non-

existent, as everything can be reduced to binary values (p. 40). This viewpoint stands in opposition to Campbell's belief that all research methods inherently contain a qualitative component (p. 40), a notion also emphasized by Paul Lazarsfeld in his studies, where he posits that single observations in a study can illuminate critical issues (Bartos, 1986). These debates underscore the concept of "Thick Description," as articulated by Clifford Geertz (1973).

Difference between Qualitative vs. Quantitative

Providing precise definitions and distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research proves challenging, as various scholars offer contested and broad interpretations. For instance, Cresswell (2003) defines qualitative methods as an approach utilizing diverse knowledge claims, inquiry strategies, data collection, and analysis methods (p.179). However, this definition remains broad and challenging to comprehend fully. Kombo and Tromp (2009) present a more comprehensive definition, characterizing qualitative research as an approach focused on description and the examination of human culture and behavior from the perspective of the subjects under study (p.9). Interestingly, these characteristics could also apply to quantitative research.

Quantitative research remains particularly intricate to define and understand. A basic definition suggests it is an approach used to quantify problems by generating numerical data that can be transformed into usable statistics. Nonetheless, this definition remains insufficient. Kombo and Tromp offer a similar definition, describing it as a method relying on principle verification to confirm, prove, corroborate, or substantiate knowledge emerging from direct observation. This definition, while seemingly adequate, can also apply to certain qualitative approaches. Consequently, some scholars have shifted the focus from method definitions to causal mechanisms and their inferences.

Causal Mechanisms and Inferences

Research's fundamental purpose is to identify causation for specific outcomes within the theory's scope (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006). Therefore, a method's validity lies in its ability to correlate causes with outcomes. Both qualitative and quantitative methods aim to achieve this objective. Craig Parsons (2007) argues that the distinction

between qualitative and quantitative approaches can be understood by examining the "Humean vs. non-Humean" debate. Parsons defines these concepts as follows: the Humean perspective asserts that causation is never directly observed, while the non-Humean viewpoint believes that causation becomes visible by focusing on correlations that trace "within-case" mechanisms generating events (p. 7).

These perspectives raise questions about the validity and objectivity of causal inferences when human actions play a pivotal role in research. Max Weber argued that human action's role in research generates arguments distinct from explanations, suggesting that our actions, influenced by psychological, structural, ideational, and institutional factors, significantly impact the causal inferences we make. However, Jon Elster (1998) and Gondwe (2018) argue against this notion, asserting that valid causal inferences present mechanisms aligned with individual intentions. In other words, Elster argues that valid causal inferences do not require automatic physical causal logics or functional explanations to establish validity.

Quality vs. Quantity in Research Methods

A recurring debate in social science research centers on the balance between quality and quantity, particularly in the context of Small N versus Large N studies and their implications for establishing causality. Quality emphasizes that a moderately small number of observations can yield valid outcomes, provided the observations are of high quality. Qualitative researchers view causation in terms of necessity (Mahoney & Goertz, p. 232). Conversely, quantity posits that a large number of observations increase the likelihood of obtaining valid outcomes. Quantitative researchers aim to identify causes affecting outcomes across a large population (Mahoney & Goertz, p. 232). Quantity often involves controlled experiments where the researcher remains unaware of the outcome until applying the treatment.

Recent debates have shifted the focus from the plausibility of Small N studies to the strategies employed in analyzing causal inferences. These debates also consider whether Small and Large N studies share a common logic of inference. While Ragin (1982) argues that the two do not share a common logic, King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) contend that differences between the two traditions are primarily stylistic and methodologically insignificant (p. 4).

Nonetheless, qualitative research tends to adopt a more defensive stance, while quantitative research often maintains an offensive position.

Research Methods in Communication Studies

Within the realm of communication studies at the graduate level, qualitative research stands out as the favored approach. A significant proportion of these graduate students choose to employ qualitative research methodologies in their dissertations and theses. As noted by Murtonen and Lehtinen (1999), many students in the social sciences, including communication, find quantitative methods to be more challenging, leading them to gravitate towards qualitative approaches. Maliepaard et al. (1998) argue that this preference can be attributed, in part, to the perceptions that students in social sciences and the arts hold regarding science as a whole.

Moreover, Ryder et al.'s findings suggest that students' actions during science learning tasks are influenced by their existing scientific knowledge. This implies that students in fields closely related to science are more inclined to engage in scientific inquiries due to their possession of specialized scientific knowledge and skills, setting them apart from their peers. Consequently, students in communication studies should acquire a comprehensive understanding of the scientific processes underpinning causal mechanisms and their subsequent scientific inferences.

Given the prevalence of graduate students favoring qualitative research, one might expect a parallel trend among faculty members. Logically, this leads to the argument that communication journals should contain a higher proportion of qualitative studies compared to quantitative ones. However, it's essential to recognize that these observations primarily pertain to graduate students. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to investigate the predominant research methodologies in the broader field of communication studies. The underlying hypothesis posits that, despite the inclination of graduate students towards qualitative research, many communication journals exhibit a preference for quantitative studies.

METHODS

A random stratified selection method was employed to choose five high-ranking communication journals published in the United States in 2016. Additionally, within each selected journal, four issues were randomly chosen to represent all the issues from that year. This process yielded a total sample of 160 articles for analysis. To operationalize the study, each article underwent a meticulous examination to ascertain the research methodology employed by the author. The methods identified in the articles were categorized into three groups: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. To ensure consistency and accuracy in this categorization process, definitions provided by The Centre for Innovation in Research and Teaching (CIRT) and the *MeasuringU* firm were used as guidelines. Summarized definitions from these sources are presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Summary of the types of Quantitative Research Designs

Types of Design	Key Focus & Control of Variables	Intervention Applied	Example	Common Study Design
Descriptive	Observational; Describe “What is”, Variables not controlled	No	A description of teenagers’ attitudes towards smoking	Comparative descriptive design; cross-sectional designs, longitudinal designs
Correlational	Explores and observes relationships among variables; variables not controlled	No	A study of the relationship between IQ and clinical depression	Descriptive correlation designs; predictive designs, and model-testing designs
Quasi-Experimental	Tests for causality with suboptimal variable control; Independent variable not manipulated	Yes	A study of the effect of an after school physical activity program on childhood obesity rates	Pre-and post-test designs; post-test only designs; interrupted times-series designs
Experimental	Tests causality with optimal control variable control; independent variable is manipulated	Yes	A study of the effects of a new diet treatment plan on insulin levels in diabetics	Classic experimental designs; randomized designs; crossover designs, nested designs

source: *Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching* (2017)

Table 2: Summary of the types of Qualitative Methods (Jeff Sauro)

Method	Focus	Sample Size	Data Collection
Ethnography	Context or culture	N/A	Observation & Interviews
Narrative	Individual experience & sequence	1-2	Stories from individuals & documents
Phenomenological	People who have experienced a phenomenon	5-25	Interviews
Grounded Theory	Develop a theory from grounded in field	20-60	Interviews, then open and axial coding
Case Study	Organization, entity, individual, or event	N/A	Interviews, documents, reports, observation

Source: *MeasuringU* (<https://measuringu.com/qual-methods/>) 2017

The sample size delineated in Table 2, while informative, was not given undue emphasis as a sole criterion for the classification of research designs. It was recognized that in certain cases, studies extended beyond the prescribed limits set for a particular research design, despite being unequivocally categorized as, for instance, Grounded Theory. Similarly, a cautious approach was adopted concerning the category of "descriptive," with a deliberate effort to avoid undue influence from the varying definitions offered by scholars when discerning between qualitative and quantitative research.

Special consideration was directed toward mixed methods studies during the identification phase, acknowledging their significance within the realm of research methodologies. However, despite their acknowledged importance, the cumulative number of mixed methods studies did not warrant an in-depth textual analysis of their specific research designs, as their representation was comparatively limited within the sample. This methodological approach aimed to maintain clarity and consistency in the classification process, ensuring that the analysis accurately reflected the predominant trends within the selected articles.

RESULTS

The findings of this study stem from a meticulous examination of a total of 160 articles, all of which were published in the year 2016 and sourced from five renowned journals in the field of communication. Each of these journals was scrutinized separately, involving a systematic random selection of four distinct issues from each publication for subsequent textual analysis. The overarching results of this extensive analysis unveil a notable trend within the landscape of communication studies.

Specifically, they highlight a consistent and upward trajectory in the prevalence of qualitative research. However, this surge in qualitative studies has not eclipsed the enduring significance of quantitative research, which maintains a prominent position within the field. It is crucial to emphasize that not all quantitative or qualitative research designs enjoy the same level of preference among scholars and journal editors. The ensuing tables offer a comprehensive breakdown of these research outcomes, shedding light on the specific distribution patterns and trends observed within the selected articles.

Table 3A. Journal of Communication (2016)

	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed	Total
Vol. 66				
Issue 13	5	1	9	
Issue 33	5	0	8	
Issue 64	3	0	7	
Issue 53	4	0	7	
Total	13	17	1	31

Table 3A, which is presented above, offers a comprehensive overview of the articles featured in the Journal of Communication throughout the year 2016. Within this set of 31 articles, a predominant presence of qualitative research was evident, constituting 17 of the total. In contrast, there were 13 articles employing quantitative methods, and just one article opting for a mixed-method approach. This distribution translates to corresponding percentages of 54.83%, 41.93%, and 3.22%, respectively.

Delving into the realm of quantitative research, it becomes

apparent that the distribution among various design types was relatively equitable. Descriptive and correlation studies marginally outnumbered quasi-experimental and experimental studies. However, within the domain of qualitative research, a noticeable disparity emerged. Grounded theory designs held the majority share at 35.29%, followed closely by phenomenological approaches, which comprised 29.41% of the qualitative studies. The remaining qualitative design categories each accounted for 11.76% of the total, reflecting an even distribution. To provide a clearer summary of these findings, a condensed table is presented below.

Table 3B. Types of qualitative and Quantitative methods used in the Journal.

	Quantitative Type	No.	Qualitative Type	No.
2016				
Vol. 66				
Issue 1	- Descriptive	1	-Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	2	- Narrative	2
	- Quasi- Exp.	1	- Phenomena	2
	- Experiments	0	- Case Study	0
			- G/Theory	2
Issue 3	- Descriptive	0	- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	1	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	1	- Phenomena	1
	- Experiments	1	- Case Study	1
			- G/Theory	3
Issue 5	- Descriptive	1	- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	0	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	1	- Phenomena	1
	- Experiments	1	- Case Study	1
			- G/Theory	2
Issue 6	- Descriptive	2	- Ethnography	2
	- Correlational	1	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	0	- Phenomena	1
	- Experiments	1	- Case Study	0
			- G/Theory	0

Source: Greg Gondwe, 2017

New Media and Society Journal

The second phase of analysis involved a comprehensive examination of four issues from the New Media and Society Journal, each published in the year 2016. This dataset comprised a total of 42 articles, and the breakdown of research methodologies is illustrated in

Table 4A below. It is evident that the majority of articles in these issues stemmed from qualitative research, with 66.66% adopting this approach. In contrast, 28.57% of the articles were quantitative in nature, while a smaller fraction, 2.38%, employed mixed methods to conduct their research. These statistics shed light on the prevalent research paradigms within this journal's publications during the specified period.

Table 4 A. New Media and Society (2016)

	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed	Total
Vol. 18				
Issue 1	3	5	0	8
Issue 4	0	7	0	7
Issue 7	2	4	0	6
Issue 11	7	12	1	20
Total	12	28	1	42

Specific to the Journal of Communication design above, articles with a descriptive approach in quantitative research paved a way with 58.33%. Articles that employed correlations, quasi-experiments and experiments shared a considerably equal distribution. An equal distribution was equally observed within qualitative research methods, but with articles employing case studies recording 35.71% of the total. Overall, an equal distribution of different types of research designs was observed. Below are the tables indicating the findings.

Table 4.B. Types of qualitative and Quantitative methods used in the Journal

	Quant Type	No.	Qualitative Type	No.
2016		11		
Vol. 18				
Issue 1	Descriptive	2	Ethnography	1
	Correlational	1	Naturalistic	0

Journal of Communication Communication

In the case of the Journal of Communication for the year 2016, a total of 23 articles underwent the same rigorous analysis as those from the previously mentioned journals. However, a notable distinction emerged within this journal's publication patterns. Unlike the aforementioned two journals, the Journal of Communication exclusively featured quantitative articles, amounting to a striking 100% of the articles analyzed. This distinctive characteristic invites several plausible interpretations.

Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed	Total
Vol. 43			
Issue 25	0	0	5
Issue 46	0	0	6
Issue 66	0	0	6
Issue 86	0	0	6
Total	23	0	23

One inference that can be drawn from these findings is that the Journal of Communication may not be inclined to accommodate qualitative research articles within its publication scope. This could signify a deliberate editorial policy or a prevailing preference among scholars who engage in qualitative research to seek publication avenues in other journals that align more closely with their research methodologies.

Table 5.B. Types of qualitative and Quantitative methods used in the Journal

	Quant Type	No.	Qualitative Type	No.
Vol. 43				
Issue 2	- Descriptive	2	-Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	0	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	0	- Phenomena	0
	- Experiments	3	- Case Study	1
			- G/Theory	0
Issue 4	- Descriptive	2	- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	2	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	0	- Phenomena	0
	- Experiments	2	- Case Study	0
			- G/Theory	0
Issue 6	- Descriptive	3	- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	1	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	0	- Phenomena	0
	- Experiments	2	- Case Study	0
			- G/Theory	0
Issue 8	- Descriptive	3	- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	0	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	3	- Phenomena	0
	- Experiments	0	- Case Study	0
			- G/Theory	0

Furthermore, akin to the trends observed in other articles from different journals, the prevalence of descriptive research approaches remained prominent within the Journal of Communication,

constituting a significant proportion of 43.47%. These intriguing findings raise questions about the editorial focus and preferences of different communication journals and suggest potential areas for further exploration within the realm of research publication patterns.

Journal of Mass Communication and Society

In our examination of the Journal of Mass Communication and Society, we analyzed a total of 23 articles sourced from the four issues published in 2016. These articles presented an intriguing mixture of research methodologies. Among these, a significant majority, comprising 69.56% of the total, were categorized as quantitative studies. These quantitative research articles followed diverse approaches to data collection and analysis.

In contrast, qualitative research articles constituted 26.08% of the sample, demonstrating a substantial presence within this particular journal. Qualitative studies often delve deep into the nuances of human behavior and communication processes, providing valuable insights into complex phenomena. Additionally, we observed one article, or 4.34% of the total, that employed a mixed-methods approach. Mixed methods research combines both quantitative and qualitative techniques to offer a comprehensive understanding of research questions, showcasing the versatility of this journal in accommodating diverse research paradigms.

These findings from the Journal of Mass Communication and Society offer a nuanced perspective on the research landscape within the field of mass communication, reflecting the coexistence and interplay of various research methodologies in scholarly exploration.

Table 6A. Mass Communication and Society (2016)

	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed	Total
Vol. 19				
Issue 13	1	0	4	
Issue 35	1	0	6	
Issue 53	4	0	7	
Issue 65	0	1	6	
Total	16	6	1	23

Table 6B: Types of approaches employed.

	Quant Type	No.	Qualitative Type	No.
2016				
Vol. 19				
Issue 1	- Descriptive	1	- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	0	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	1	- Phenomena	0
	- Experiments	1	- Case Study	0
			- G/Theory	1
Issue 3	- Descriptive	3	- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	2	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	0	- Phenomena	0
	- Experiments	0	- Case Study	1
			- G/Theory	0
Issue 5	- Descriptive	3	- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	0	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	0	- Phenomena	1
	- Experiments	0	- Case Study	1
			- G/Theory	2
Issue 6	- Descriptive	4	- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational	1	- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.	1	- Phenomena	0
	- Experiments	0	- Case Study	0
			- G/Theory	0

Source: Gregory Gondwe 2017

The data presented in Table 6B offers valuable insights into the prevailing preferences for research designs within the field of communication, specifically highlighting the prominence of certain approaches in scholarly publications. It is evident that descriptive research designs continue to be highly favored by the journals of

communication, constituting a substantial portion of quantitative articles at 68.75%. Descriptive research methods are particularly valuable in providing a detailed account of phenomena, often serving as foundational work for subsequent studies.

Conversely, among qualitative research approaches, Grounded Theory, Case Studies, and Phenomenology emerged as the leading choices among scholars. Grounded Theory, with its emphasis on building theory from empirical data, was favored by a significant portion of qualitative studies. Case Studies, renowned for their in-depth exploration of specific cases or contexts, also garnered substantial attention from researchers. Phenomenology, which seeks to understand the essence of human experiences, found its place among the preferred qualitative approaches. However, it's worth noting that Ethnographic and Narrative designs did not feature prominently in the sampled articles, indicating potential areas for further exploration or varying preferences in qualitative methodologies.

This comprehensive overview of research design preferences within communication journals underscores the dynamic nature of scholarly inquiry in the field. Researchers employ diverse approaches, each tailored to their specific research questions and objectives, contributing to the richness and complexity of communication scholarship.

International Journal of Press/Politics

The Journal of International Press/Politics, a significant publication in the field, contributed 41 articles to this study. These articles were carefully selected from the four issues published in 2016. The analysis of these articles revealed an interesting distribution among research methods. Quantitative research stood out as the dominant approach, with 28 of the articles employing quantitative methodologies. This preference for quantitative methods can be attributed to the precision and rigor often associated with these approaches, making them suitable for studying complex international

press and political phenomena.

Qualitative research, although less prevalent in comparison to quantitative methods, was still noteworthy, with 11 articles adopting qualitative approaches. Qualitative research in this context likely aimed to delve into the nuances of international press and politics, exploring the human dimensions, motivations, and behaviors that quantitative data alone may not fully capture. Remarkably, two articles in this journal employed mixed methods, representing the highest occurrence of mixed methods in this study. This suggests that scholars in the field of international press and politics recognize the value of combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of complex global issues.

The table below provides a succinct summary of these findings, shedding light on the diverse methodological choices made by researchers in the Journal of International Press/Politics in 2016.

Table 7 A. International Journal of Press/Politics (2016)

Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed	Total
Vol. 93			
Issue 13	2	1	6
Issue 24	2	0	6
Issue 36	3	0	9
Issue 415	4	1	20
Total	28	11	41

Notably, a significant majority, approximately 71.41% of quantitative articles, employed a descriptive research approach. This preference for descriptive methods suggests that researchers in this field often aim to provide a detailed account of international press and political phenomena, focusing on comprehensive data collection and analysis to paint a clear picture of complex issues. Following closely behind, around 25% of quantitative articles adopted quasi-experimental designs. This choice indicates a desire to establish causal relationships and test hypotheses related to international press and politics, albeit without the controlled conditions of full experiments.

It's worth mentioning that experiments as a research design were notably absent among the quantitative articles in this journal. This could be attributed to the challenges of conducting experiments in the context of international press and politics, where variables are often difficult to control or manipulate systematically. Conversely, in the realm of qualitative research articles, a more balanced distribution of research designs was observed. Grounded Theory emerged as the most frequently employed qualitative approach, indicating a commitment to understanding international press and politics through the lens of grounded, in-depth theory building. Additionally, narrative approaches were utilized in one article, demonstrating an interest in exploring the storytelling aspects of global political issues.

However, ethnography did not make an appearance among the selected articles, suggesting that this particular qualitative approach may be less common or less suited to the study of international press and politics.

Table 7B, provided below, offers a concise summary of these findings, shedding light on the methodological preferences of researchers within the Journal of International Press/Politics in 2016.

Table 7B: Types of approaches within the methods

	Quant Type	No.	Qualitative Type	No.
2016				
Vol. 93				
Issue 1	- Descriptive		3- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational		0- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.		0- Phenomena	2
	- Experiments		0- Case Study	0
			- G/Theory	0
Issue 3	- Descriptive		3- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational		0- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.		2- Phenomena	0
	- Experiments		0- Case Study	1
			- G/Theory	1
Issue 5	- Descriptive		4- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational		0- Narrative	1
	- Quasi- Exp.		2- Phenomena	0
	- Experiments		0- Case Study	1
			- G/Theory	1
Issue 7	- Descriptive		10- Ethnography	0
	- Correlational		1- Narrative	0
	- Quasi- Exp.		2- Phenomena	1
	- Experiments		0- Case Study	1
			- G/Theory	2

DISCUSSION

Overall findings

Within the realm of quantitative research, the descriptive design emerged as the most favored approach, comprising a substantial 53.68% of the total quantitative articles. This preference for descriptive research reflects the importance placed on providing detailed and comprehensive data-driven insights into various aspects of communication and related phenomena. Following closely behind were quasi-experimental designs, representing 17.89% of the articles. Researchers opting for this approach sought to establish causal relationships and test hypotheses within the constraints of observational data.

Experiments, a hallmark of quantitative research, claimed a noteworthy 14.73% share, indicating the willingness of scholars to engage in controlled investigations, albeit to a lesser extent. Correlation studies, which explore relationships between variables, accounted for 13.68% of the quantitative articles, further underlining the diverse methodological landscape within quantitative communication research.

In contrast, qualitative research exhibited a different pattern of methodological preferences. Grounded Theory, Case Studies, and Phenomenological approaches emerged as the most frequently employed qualitative methodologies, collectively making up a substantial 81.7% of the total qualitative articles. Grounded Theory, in particular, held a prominent position, constituting 30.64% of the qualitative studies. This suggests a strong inclination among communication scholars to delve deeply into grounded, contextually rich explorations of various communication phenomena. Conversely, ethnographic and narrative approaches found less favor among researchers in the selected articles, accounting for only a combined 8.06% of the qualitative studies. This divergence in preferences may reflect the unique challenges and demands associated with ethnography and narrative research within the field of communication studies.

Implication of the Findings

The study's findings underscore the methodological diversity within the field of communication studies, with quantitative research, particularly the descriptive approach, retaining a significant presence. Qualitative research, characterized by Grounded Theory, Case Studies, and Phenomenology, offers rich insights into communication phenomena, albeit with less prominence. These findings illuminate the evolving landscape of research methodologies in communication studies and provide valuable insights for scholars and practitioners alike. The findings of this study have several implications for the field of communication studies and offer valuable insights for researchers, educators, and journal editors.

Methodological Diversity in Communication Studies:

The field of communication studies has witnessed a surge in methodological diversity in recent years. Researchers have moved beyond the traditional boundaries of quantitative and qualitative research, exploring an array of innovative approaches to investigate communication phenomena. This chapter delves into the evolving landscape of research methods in communication studies, examining the prevalence of various approaches and shedding light on the factors influencing methodological choices.

Implications for Methodological Pluralism:

One significant implication of this methodological diversity is the recognition of methodological pluralism within communication studies. Researchers now acknowledge that the study of communication is multifaceted and multidimensional, demanding a variety of research tools to explore its complexities. This pluralistic approach empowers scholars to adopt the methods that best align with their research questions and objectives.

The Dominance of Descriptive Quantitative Research:

One prominent trend identified in the study is the prevalence of descriptive quantitative research within communication studies. This research design is characterized by its focus on comprehensive data collection and analysis. Scholars increasingly turn to this method to establish a solid empirical foundation for understanding

communication processes and their effects. The chapter delves into the reasons behind the popularity of descriptive quantitative research and explores its implications for the field.

Qualitative Research and Grounded Theory:

While quantitative research holds a prominent position, qualitative research, particularly grounded theory, has seen a steady rise in adoption. Grounded theory's ascendancy reflects a commitment to in-depth exploration and theory development within communication studies. This approach emphasizes the importance of context and meaning, aligning with the qualitative tradition's core principles.

Challenges for Ethnography and Narrative Research:

Despite the methodological diversity, the study also highlights certain challenges. Ethnography and narrative research methods, which prioritize context-rich exploration and storytelling, recorded lower utilization rates. This suggests that these approaches may face hurdles or require additional methodological support within communication studies. The chapter explores potential reasons for these challenges and discusses strategies for overcoming them.

Future Directions in Research Methodologies:

This chapter concludes by offering recommendations for future research in communication studies. It emphasizes the need to delve deeper into mixed methods approaches, investigate evolving methodological trends over time, and explore the contextual factors that influence researchers' methodological choices. Additionally, it encourages comparative studies across academic disciplines and highlights the importance of ethical considerations in methodological decisions. The chapter underscores the role of academic institutions, professional organizations, and journal editors in promoting methodological diversity and providing resources for researchers. In summary, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the evolving landscape of research methods in communication studies, shedding light on methodological preferences, their implications, and future directions for methodological pluralism within the field.

CONCLUSION

In the ever-evolving field of communication studies, the methodological landscape has undergone significant transformation. This journey through the diverse research methods employed by scholars across communication journals has unveiled several noteworthy trends and implications for the discipline. As we conclude this exploration, it becomes evident that methodological pluralism is not only desirable but also essential for advancing our understanding of communication processes.

Embracing Methodological Pluralism:

The prevalence of various research methods in communication studies reflects the inherent complexity of human communication. Rather than adhering to a one-size-fits-all approach, researchers have embraced methodological pluralism. This diversity allows scholars to tailor their methodological choices to the nuances of their research questions, ultimately enriching the field with multifaceted insights.

The Ascendancy of Descriptive Quantitative Research:

One prominent finding is the dominance of descriptive quantitative research within communication studies. This method's emphasis on comprehensive data collection and analysis aligns with the field's pursuit of empirically robust findings. The widespread adoption of descriptive quantitative research underscores the importance of rigorous empirical foundations in communication scholarship.

Qualitative Research and Grounded Theory:

While quantitative research maintains a stronghold, qualitative research, particularly grounded theory, has emerged as a rising star. Grounded theory's popularity highlights the discipline's commitment to exploring communication phenomena in-depth and constructing contextually grounded theories. The field recognizes the value of understanding the intricate meaning-making processes that underlie human communication.

Challenges and Opportunities:

This analysis also reveals challenges faced by certain qualitative approaches, such as ethnography and narrative research. These methods, which prioritize contextual exploration and storytelling, may

require further methodological support and attention to thrive within communication studies. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovative methodological development and adaptation.

Future Directions and Ethical Considerations:

Looking ahead, it is imperative that communication scholars continue to explore mixed methods approaches, delve into the evolution of methodological trends over time, and investigate the contextual factors influencing researchers' methodological choices. Moreover, ethical considerations should remain at the forefront of methodological decisions, ensuring research is conducted responsibly and with integrity.

Collaboration and Advocacy:

Promoting methodological diversity and providing resources for researchers should be a collaborative effort involving academic institutions, professional organizations, and journal editors.

Encouraging interdisciplinary comparative studies can further enrich the field's understanding of methodological preferences and practices.

In conclusion, the dynamic methodological landscape in communication studies reflects the field's commitment to embracing diversity and complexity in its pursuit of knowledge. By recognizing the value of various research methods and their unique contributions, communication scholars can continue to advance the discipline and deepen our understanding of human communication processes.

Methodological pluralism is not just a desirable trait; it is an essential feature of a thriving and evolving field.

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